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Title : Direct and Indirect Catches of Cetaceans by Taiwanese Fisheries

Category : Conservation

Student : Not Applicable

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Abstract : Taiwanese fishermen hunted cetaceans freely for decades until the Wildlife Conservation Law of Taiwan prohibited the killing of cetaceans in 1990. However, substantial direct and indirect mortalities due to Taiwanese fisheries still occur. Since 1993 (mainly during 1994 and 1995), fishing ports were visited to record information on cetaceans that were taken by fisheries. The data indicated that illegal directed (but generally opportunistic) catches and incidental kills (mainly by net fisheries) of predominantly small cetaceans in coastal waters still occurred extensively. Some takes of larger cetaceans (including killer, false killer, beaked, sperm and baleen whales) were also recorded. Harpoons and large-mesh pelagic driftnets accounted for the greatest number of directed and incidental catches, respectively. Although many types of gear used by Taiwanese fishermen take cetaceans, the magnitude of the incidental catch by the large-mesh pelagic driftnets is of very serious concern. Furthermore, the killing of cetaceans by Taiwanese fishermen was not restricted to Taiwanese waters. Observations of landings of the Taiwanese far seas tuna longline fleet also showed considerable kills and fishermen reports suggest that Taiwan's far seas tuna purse seine vessels have been setting on and killing large numbers of small oceanic cetaceans. Takes of cetaceans by Taiwanese boats in foreign waters have also been reported by researchers of other nations. Periodic confiscations of large quantities of cetacean parts and arrests of fishermen and fish processors in Taiwan and recent opportunistic observations of covert operations provide evidence that the killing of cetaceans within and beyond Taiwanese waters has not stopped and substantial illegal markets for cetacean meat still exist in Taiwan. Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the enforcement of the Wildlife Conservation Law are made.